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SUBJECT: TALKING POINTS FOR ETHIOPIA-ERITREA CONSULTATIONS

¶1. USUN is instructed to draw from the talking points in paragraph 3 below in its January 25 consultations on Ethiopia-Eritrea.

¶2. OBJECTIVES: USUN should seek to: (1) extend UNMEE's mandate for six months; (2) continue the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ); (3) avoid discussion of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission's demarcation decision by map coordinates and any pressure for the parties to implement it; (4) support the SYG's efforts to engage the parties; and (5) support efforts to lift restrictions on UNMEE, especially the current fuel crisis.

¶3. Begin talking points:

-- The United States first wants to thank Acting Special Representative Ennifer for his briefing and to pay particular tribute to the efforts of UNMEE's military and civilian staff, who are working to accomplish their mission despite the difficult circumstances they face.

-- The United States remains deeply concerned about the continuing impasse between Ethiopia and Eritrea. There is no political engagement, military buildups on both sides continue, and tensions are high. Resumption of hostilities would further destabilize the Horn of Africa and create a humanitarian crisis in the region.

-- Now more than ever the United States believes UNMEE and the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) play a useful, stabilizing role. We respectfully disagree with the Secretary General's recommendation for a technical one-

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month rollover until the UNMEE fuel crisis can be resolved. While we understand the diesel fuel shortage in Eritrea, we believe UNMEE should be able to import this fuel from other sources.

-- We are concerned that the Eritrean government's cutoff of UNMEE fuel supplies on December 1, its refusal to permit UNMEE to import this fuel, the other restrictions it has placed on UNMEE, and its letters to the Council are an effort to use UNMEE to force this Council to take sides in the bilateral dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

-- We believe that the continued presence of UNMEE is important to stability in the Horn and therefore recommend that UNMEE's mandate be renewed for a full six months. We call on Eritrea to allow UNMEE to make provisions for adequate fuel supplies and to lift all restrictions or impediments to UNMEE's operations.

-- We also believe that the TSZ remains essential as conditions along the boundary remain tense. We therefore call for

continued respect for the TSZ in accord with the Algiers Agreements and previous UNSC resolutions. We repeat the call for Eritrea to withdraw all of its military forces there.

-- The United States remains committed to the peaceful resolution of this conflict. We urge the parties to respect their commitments in the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and Algiers Agreement and stand ready to assist the parties in this effort.

-- Eritrea and Ethiopia must realize that they are ultimately responsible for resolving their border dispute and normalizing their relations. The United States and the international community stand ready to assist the parties in meeting this objective, but it is up to the parties themselves to agree upon a way forward.

-- However, we recommend three specific steps the parties might take to lessen tensions and set the stage for further progress.

1) We encourage the parties to meet under the auspices of the Joint Military Coordination Commission to open a channel of communications.

2) The parties should, in cooperation with UNMEE, cooperate in humanitarian activities along the border and agree to mutually disengage militarily at critical points.

3) We support the appointment of a new SRSG and urge the parties to accept this nomination and cooperate with this official.

-- We fully support the efforts of the SYG to engage the parties and urge them too cooperate in this initiative. Direct engagement is essential to resolution of the impasse.

Question for DPKO:

-- If UNMEE-Eritrea reaches a critical fuel level and must drawdown, what will that evacuation look like? Will UNMEE-Eritrea forces simply drive across the border to Ethiopia?

-- Have you discussed with Ethiopia the idea of hosting additional UNMEE forces?

IF NEEDED:

-- It is up to the parties to the Algiers Agreements, not third parties, to decide whether and how to implement the decisions of the EEBC.

-- There are no impediments to continuation of UNMEE and the TSZ. The parties disagree on the impact of the EEBC's

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decisions. Until such time as they cooperate to develop a workable boundary regime and move toward normalized relations, UNMEE and the TSZ are essential to efforts to stabilize the region and prevent possible conflict.

end points
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